Regulation of poppy production

801. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that huge quantity of opium poppy is illegally produced and marketed in Malwa district of Madhya Pradesh causing huge loss to exchequer;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to regulate and account for production of poppy for proper taxation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) No Sir.

(c) In India, poppy cultivation is undertaken by the licensed cultivators, under the supervision of the Central Bureau of Narcotics, in the tracts notified by the Central Government in the three States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The entire produce of opium is collected under proper record from the cultivators during the weighment operations and the collected opium is dispatched in sealed containers to Government Opium and Alkaloid Works, Neemuch and Ghazipur for analysis. The price of opium to the cultivators is paid as per rates fixed by the Government of India and the Purchase Tax on opium received from the cultivators is paid to the concerned States at the rates prescribed by them. The records relating to the price paid to the cultivators and the amount paid as purchase tax on opium are maintained in the Central Bureau of Narcotics and its Divisional office.

Mobile banks in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh

802. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to provide banking facilities in rural, backwards, snowbound and far-flung areas of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh through mobile banks; and

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating areas to be covered in these States under the above project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Under the extant Branch Authorisation Policy of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), banks are encouraged to open branches in rural and underbanked areas. It is left to the banks to decide whether they want to open branches or mobile offices. Such requests are considered sympathetically by the RBI. -

It has been further reported by the RBI that they have not received any proposal from banks for opening of mobile offices in the States of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

Handing over of pension funds to Central records keeping Agency

803. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to hand over the pension funds to Central Records Keeping Agency for back-end operations like spending in stock market;

(b) if so, who are the interested parties for the job; and

(c) what are the broad guidelines of new pension scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is in the process of selecting a Central Recordkeeping Agency (CRA) in the public sector for maintenance of records under the New Pension System (NPS) applicable to new Central Government employees with effect from 01-01-2004. This facility will also be offered to State Governments for their employees. PFRDA has informed that the following six entities have expressed interest to function as the CRA:-

(i) Life Insurance Corporation of India;

(ii) National Securities Depository Limited;

(iii) Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited;

(iv) Union Bank of India;

(v) UTI Technology Services Limited; and

(vi) Writer Information Management Services